



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Marketing & Communications Module



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### **About Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)**

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado is the oldest and largest outdoor stewardship organization in the state. We work to connect people to Colorado's outdoors in ways that inspire them to be caretakers of the state's natural resources. This is especially important because the demands on our outdoor resources are extensive and Colorado's stewardship needs are reaching a near-crisis level. VOC is playing a leading role in addressing these challenges in three ways. First, we're fostering statewide collaboration on issues and solutions. We're also expanding stewardship efforts by helping others build and grow successful volunteer programs. Finally, we're continuing to engage 5,000 volunteers each year in on-the-ground, hands-on stewardship work.

# Executive Summary

**T**here are many opportunities to get the word out to your community about your programs and projects – and many ways to ensure you are sharing valuable information and stories about where your programs and projects are taking place, what the volunteer experience is, and why this work matters. This guide provides community outreach ideas and suggestions to help you start or expand your community outreach initiatives, with a focus on online/digital outreach and face-to-face events.

- ▶ **3-Pronged Approach for Developing an Outreach Strategy:**
  - ▶ **Situation Analysis:** Examine what your goals and strategies are, and what communications materials and channels you have versus what needs to be developed.
  - ▶ **Community Outreach Plan:** Create an agreed-upon way forward, describing in detail the strategies and tactics your community outreach team will use (taking into account what you discovered during the situation analysis). A plan will ensure everyone involved is on the same page.
  - ▶ **Roadmap:** Create a chart or calendar to make sure everyone on your outreach team is in agreement about what is going to happen and how it will get done. It should include key milestones, dates, tasks, and owners as well as room for opportunities that present themselves later.
  
- ▶ **Choose a Platform:** Sharing news about the organization, the larger cause, and brand recognition are three main goals of nonprofits' social media efforts.
  - ▶ **Choose the platform(s) that make the most sense** for you based on what your target audiences are using, the type of content you want to share, and the tone and personality of your organization.
  - ▶ **Consider creating one or more regularly scheduled campaigns** that share photos, stories, data, and metrics demonstrating your programs and projects.
  
- ▶ **Timing Your Content:** Many organizations ask the question: "How often should I post?" It depends on the platform. Here are recommendations for optimum posting frequency on popular social media platforms:
  - ▶ **Facebook:** 1 post per day; curate or reshare a post every other day
  - ▶ **Twitter:** 15 tweets per day; retweet or curate 7 tweets per day
  - ▶ **LinkedIn:** 1 post per day; curate or reshare a post every other day
  - ▶ **Instagram:** 1-2 posts per day; curate posts only when necessary and beneficial
  
- ▶ **E-mail/E-newsletter:** Send out newsletters via email to share your program and project stories directly to a captive audience that is already interested in what you have to say. Professional email packages provide great templates for segmenting your emails to highlight different types of stories.
  - ▶ **Include in your email/newsletter** articles such as Individual Impact Stories, Project Impact Summaries, Surveys, News Coverage, etc. (see [Step 4](#) for more examples of what to include).
  
- ▶ **Face-to-face:** Face-to-face interactions with your community are a highly effective way to connect and engage with your target audiences and a prime opportunity to share information about your projects through direct conversations, presentations and distribution of materials.
  - ▶ **Organize your own events** (milestone celebrations, open houses, award ceremonies).
  - ▶ **Use face-to-face interactions to leverage partnerships** with other organizations so that you can collaborate on events, as well as have cross-promotion in their newsletters and/or social media channels.

# Executive Summary

## ▶ Key Takeaways:

- ▶ **Plan out how** you are going to successfully create a community outreach program by identifying your goals, strategies, and resources/communication assets.
- ▶ **Two main strategies** for getting the word out about your work are 1) online/digital tools and communications 2) face-to-face opportunities and events.
- ▶ **Create one or more regularly scheduled campaigns** to share photos, stories, data and metrics demonstrating your programs and projects (ex: Motivational Monday, Photo Friday, Month in Review, Meet a Crew Leader). This helps keep your postings on a schedule with recurring themes.
- ▶ **HubSpot's "The Three A's of Nonprofit Social Media Engagement"** recommends that nonprofits share a balanced combination of posts about Appreciation (for donors/volunteers), Advocacy (for your cause) and Appeals (for support). Read more about their recommendations on [blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofit-three-as-social-media-ht](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofit-three-as-social-media-ht)
- ▶ **Distribute articles**, project information and other relevant news via social media platforms, email blasts, and face-to-face events that your organization hosts.
- ▶ **Build and leverage partnerships** with other organizations so that you can cross-promote each other's news and events.

# Introduction

**T**here are many opportunities to get the word out to your community about your programs and projects – and many ways to ensure you are always sharing valuable information and stories about where your programs and projects are taking place, what the volunteer experience is, and why this work matters. This guide provides community outreach ideas and suggestions to help you start or expand your community outreach initiatives, with a focus on online/digital outreach and face-to-face events.

This guide will be valuable for staff members responsible for communications – including marketing, public relations and development. If your organization does not have a role dedicated to these functions, staff members or volunteers involved in engaging with your community will find a variety of useful tips and advice for community outreach.

#### Please Note:

- You will find that other guides in the Stepping Up Stewardship toolkit contain additional marketing and communications tips and resources that are specific to each guide.
- The other guides in the Marketing & Communications Module – Strategic Communications Planning, Messaging, News Releases & Media Advisories, Media Relations, and Storytelling – contain further guidance and resources for communicators in those topic areas.
- All of the Stepping Up Stewardship guides are intended to be complementary and not mutually exclusive. You may need to evaluate all the various resources to determine which offer the most appropriate fit for your specific program or project.

VOC recommends using this guide in tandem with the additional guides found in the **Marketing & Communications Module**:

- ▶ [Strategic Communications Planning](#)
- ▶ [Storytelling](#)
- ▶ [Messaging](#)
- ▶ [News Releases & Media Advisories](#)
- ▶ [Media Relations](#)



# Recommended Steps

**This guide is organized** into six "steps" to help your organization develop a successful community outreach program.

These are not "linear" steps that must be followed in a specific order. Rather, think of them as sections of information that you can choose to implement based on their relevance.

## Step 1:

Explains a three-pronged approach to creating a community outreach strategy to help meet the goals and objectives of your program or project.

## Step 2:

Provides a brief introduction to using online and digital tools for reaching out to your community.

## Step 3:

Offers tips, checklists and implementation ideas for social media initiatives.

## Step 4:

Offers tips, checklists and implementation ideas for email/e-newsletter programs and websites.

## Step 5:

Offers tips, checklists and implementation ideas for online community forums.

## Step 6:

Highlights the value of face-to-face interactions when engaging with your community, and offers tips, checklists and event ideas when partnering with other organizations and piggybacking on existing opportunities.



**This Guide is accompanied by extra resources, called Supplemental Materials, that you can use to develop your community outreach initiatives.** They are mentioned throughout the guide and listed at the end, but provided separately.

# Step 1: Developing Your Strategy

**B**efore pursuing any community outreach, it is recommended that your organization first develop a strategy to determine your community outreach goals, audiences, and tools and tactics. Our recommended strategy is a three-pronged approach that includes: **1)** Situation Analysis, **2)** Community Outreach Plan, and **3)** Community Outreach Roadmap.



The three-pronged strategy approach can be scaled up or down to match the needs and resources of your organization. For example, smaller organizations with fewer resources may wish to skip development of the Situation Analysis and move right into the Community Outreach Plan – as long as there is an understanding of what the **goals and objectives** are, who the **target audiences** are, and what **tools and tactics** are available to implement the plan.

- ▶ **Situation Analysis.** The situation analysis is a thoughtful examination of what your goals and strategies are, and what communications assets you have versus what need to be developed – a bit like an audit. It allows you to collect the information you already know, and discover what you don't know, by asking the "What, Who, Why, Where, When and How" questions – for example, what you are aiming to achieve, what your desired outcomes are, who you are trying to engage, what human and technology resources you have at your disposal, what tools will be required for outreach, and other questions.
  - ▶ **What is the purpose?** The situation analysis sets the stage and direction for your community outreach plan.
  
- ▶ **Community Outreach Plan.** A community outreach plan is an agreed-upon way forward, describing in detail the strategies and tactics your community outreach team will actually use (taking into account what you discovered during the situation analysis about your goals and objectives, your target audiences, and your tactics and tools).
  - ▶ **What is the purpose?** It ensures that the staff members implementing the plan are on the same page and gives them a common document to reference.
  
- ▶ **Community Outreach Roadmap.** A roadmap is a sort of chart or calendar that helps make sure everyone on your outreach team is in agreement about what is going to happen and how it will get done. It should include key milestones, dates, tasks, and owners.
  - ▶ **What is the purpose?** It keeps you on task with your deliverables – especially as you gear up to launch an initiative or a campaign.

Templates for creating all three of these tools are included in **Supplemental Materials**.

For the purposes of the Community Outreach Guide, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) recommends that two of your strategies for getting the word out about your work include **1)** developing online/digital tools and **2)** engaging in face-to-face opportunities and events. These are outreach strategies that organizations of any size, large or small, can pursue in some capacity.

Both strategies are covered in the rest of this guide.

## Step 2: Online/Digital Tools

**E**xploiting the vast array of digital communications channels available at our fingertips today is among the fastest, most efficient and most economical ways to share information about your work, programs and projects.

Sharing content digitally enables us to reach out to our online audiences immediately at any time of day or night, enables others to easily "find" organizations through online search engines, gives content a long lifespan (longer than paper materials, which eventually get tossed in the garbage or recycle bin), and makes updating materials relatively effortless and very cost-effective.

Finally, developing content digitally provides a way to re-purpose materials for many different types of communications channels. With the addition of a few minor wording modifications and transitions, materials can be used as one-off posts, integrated into campaigns, or used to enhance or explain your organization's work within a larger context. They can be shared with different audiences in different venues – from social media and e-newsletters to websites and online community forums.

The steps below describe guidance for social media, email/e-newsletters, websites and online community forums.

## Step 3: Social Media

**S**haring news about the organization, the cause, and brand recognition are the top three goals of nonprofits' social media efforts, according to HubSpot ([blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofits-social-media-marketing-data](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofits-social-media-marketing-data)).

Below are some tips and resources you can use as guidance in developing an effective social media strategy.

- ▶ **Choosing a platform.** There are so many social platforms to choose from that sometimes, it can feel overwhelming to choose among them and to determine which channels will be most effective. There is no need to be everywhere!
  - ▶ **Prioritize your efforts** to stay focused on your strategy and to leverage the resources and time you have at your disposal.
  - ▶ **Choose the platform** that makes the most sense for you based on what your target audiences are using, the type of content you want to share, and the tone and personality of your organization.
  - ▶ **You may find it helpful** to narrow down your options based on what other nonprofits are using most. Here is a breakdown of the top four social media channels according to Buffer Blog ([blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-non-profits](http://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-non-profits)):
    - Facebook: 98%
    - Twitter: ~70%
    - LinkedIn: ~55%
    - YouTube: ~45%



*Because of the popularity of Facebook, that platform is the primary focus for this guide.*

- ▶ **Creating and scheduling campaigns.** Consider creating one or more regularly scheduled campaigns that share photos, stories, data and metrics demonstrating your programs and



## Step 3: Continued

projects. Below are a few campaign ideas to get you started:

- ▶ **Motivational Monday:** Inspirational quotes from staff members about their work, or quotes submitted by volunteers about what drives them to support you; quotes from famous poets, philosophers, scientists or humanitarians are also fun and interesting – but it may be tougher to make a connection with your specific programs and projects.
- ▶ **Mission Monday:** A statistic, quote, story or photo album illustrating one aspect of your mission that week – this is fairly broad in scope but should be easy to accomplish, since everything you do should be tied to your mission.
- ▶ **Testimonial Tuesday:** Quotes or stories from someone who has said nice things about your work, your team or a recent project they helped you complete
- ▶ **Where Are We Wednesday:** Photos and short blurbs from staff or board members out in the field, visiting project sites or meeting with partners/community members in your town or region
- ▶ **Photo Friday:** A new photo every week focused on one aspect of a successful project or initiative that week, along with a short blurb about how that project made a difference or an impact in your community
- ▶ **Works in Progress:** Documentation of a project in the works with daily or weekly updates including photos and a short blurb; vibrant photos that illustrate progress and show action and people when possible
- ▶ **Monthly or Weekly Highlights:** Photos and short narratives (a few words to a few paragraphs) highlighting the people, places and animals that benefit from your work or that make your work possible; cite statistics and data about achievements and milestones – including quantity affected (for example, # acres, miles of trail, acre-feet of water, # of people). Ideas for subjects to highlight:
  - Animal of the Month
  - Creek of the Week
  - Meadow of the Month
  - Park Picks
  - Volunteer or Intern of the Month
  - Youth in Action
- ▶ **Year in Review:** Always take advantage of the new year by touting your programs and projects – and their impacts – the previous year. Cite figures and statistics about specific ways in which you positively helped your community or region in terms of people, places and animals. Be sure to thank (and tag) partners that helped you make it happen.



*Instead of always coming up with original content, you can also use curated content. Social media curation means that you select the best content across the Internet and share it with your social media followers. This "best" content could be videos, memes, articles or news.*

## Step 3: Continued

- ▶ **Managing and timing your content.** While it may be tempting to only want to share content exclusively about your programs and projects, and the impacts of your work, it's important to incorporate a mix of content types to keep your users interested, provide value and create greater awareness about your issue in general.
  - ▶ **To manage your content,** create a social media calendar that features some content about you and some about others. A few suggested plans include:
    - From the article, "How to Schedule Social Media Content for Next Week, Next Month, and Next Year" ([blog.bufferapp.com/schedule-social-media-content-plan](http://blog.bufferapp.com/schedule-social-media-content-plan))
      - 4-1-1: 4 shares of others' original content, 1 share for every 1 original content you create
      - 5-3-2: 5 shares of others' original content, 3 posts of your original content, 2 personal updates
      - *Golden Ratio*: 60% others' content, 30% original content, 10% promotional
      - *Rule of Thirds*: 1/3 posts about you, 1/3 curated content, 1/3 conversations
    - HubSpot's "The 'Three A's' of Nonprofit Social Media Engagement" ([blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofit-three-as-social-media-ht](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/nonprofit-three-as-social-media-ht)) recommends a balanced combination of posts about:
      - *Appreciation* for your donors
      - *Advocacy* for your cause
      - *Appeals* for support
  - ▶ **How often should you post?** It depends on the platform! The CoSchedule blog ([coschedule.com/blog/how-often-to-post-on-social-media/](http://coschedule.com/blog/how-often-to-post-on-social-media/)) conducted a study of 14 different sources to determine the optimum posting frequency on various social media platforms, and here are the recommendations they came up with:
    - *Facebook*: 1 post per day; curate or re-share a post every other day
    - *Twitter*: 15 tweets per day; retweet or curate 7 tweets per day
    - *Pinterest*: 11 pins per day; re-pin or curate at least 5 per day
    - *LinkedIn*: 1 post per day; curate or re-share a post every other day
    - *Google+*: 1 post per day; curate or re-share a post every other day
    - *Instagram*: 1-2 posts per day; curate posts only when necessary or beneficial



There are various websites and apps that help you manage your social media content. Two good ones include [Buffer](#) and [HootSuite](#).

- ▶ **Additional hints and tips** for creating and managing your social media content include:
  - ▶ **Making the Ask:** Ask your social media fans to share their quotes and testimonials with you via email or by posting directly to your social media pages. Get your staff to bring ideas to weekly staff meetings.
  - ▶ **Engagement:** When sharing information about your work, you can engage your fans (get them to "like", share or comment) by prefacing your post with a question or asking friends to vote (on Facebook this is done via the "Poll" option).
  - ▶ **Graphics:** A great tool for creating imagery for social media and other applications is [www.Canva.com](http://www.Canva.com). It's easy to use, and has a business version that is free for nonprofits.

Samples of "Making the Ask" as well as a sample list of engagement questions and prompts are included in **Supplemental Materials**.

## Step 4: Email/E-Newsletters & Websites

**N**onprofits overwhelmingly say (88%) their most important communications tools are email and their websites, according to a study conducted by the Case Foundation in 2014 ([nonprofitquarterly.org/2014/03/13/social-media-nonprofits-engaging-with-community/](http://nonprofitquarterly.org/2014/03/13/social-media-nonprofits-engaging-with-community/)). As tools that have stood the test of time for community outreach efforts, a few tips are included here for nonprofits that want to promote their impacts.

- ▶ **Email/E-Newsletters.** Campaigns and newsletters issued via email are a highly affordable way to share your program and project stories directly to a captive audience that is already interested in what you have to say (since they signed up to receive your news). Professional email packages provide great templates for segmenting your emails to highlight different types of stories.
  - ▶ **If you're sending a newsletter containing multiple articles,** consider including these types of articles to promote your programs and projects:
    - *Individual impact story:* Feature an impact story at the very top of your newsletter. For example, a Q&A with someone who was involved in your program or project and is eager and willing to share about the experience and its impact on him or her. Or a testimonial or case study outlining a person's involvement in your work, complete with facts, details, quotes and photos about the experience and the impact on your local community.
    - *Impact summary:* Feature a blurb celebrating your recent programs and projects – and their impacts – with a bulleted list of measurable improvements. For example, list impacts that resulted from your work last year or last month in your region (e.g., number of people who benefited, or number of acres/miles of trail/acre-feet of water affected), along with a thank-you or shout-out to your partners that helped make it happen. Don't forget to spike it with a few photos or links to a photo album or video.
    - *Funding news announcement:* Feature a news release announcing a grant you received to launch a new project or series of initiatives over the coming year, with specific details about what those projects intend to achieve. If the grant is a re-grant from the previous year, highlight outcomes and impacts that resulted. Include the complete news release directly in the e-news, or paste a blurb summarizing the main point of the news, with a link to the complete news release on your website. Don't forget to include photos of any relevant projects, and insert hyperlinks from the news release to your funder's website.
    - *Surveys/reports:* Feature a blurb promoting a recent study, survey or research report that was issued about your industry – especially if it contains stories and data about your organization. Insert a screenshot of the report's cover page, and hyperlinks to the report if it's available online.
    - *News coverage:* Include a section dedicated to relevant news coverage featuring your organization and your partners – especially articles that feature your work in your community or region. For each media hit, insert the publication name and the article title, with a hyperlink to the article online.
  - ▶ **If you are sending an email focused exclusively on a single issue,** consider this approach:
    - *Short blurbs separated by photos:* In your email, feature very short blocks of texts with plenty of photos interspersed between the text. Breaking up text with lots of interesting visuals helps keep readers engaged. Include a call to action at the end of the email – for example, invite them to visit your next project, come meet the people making this work happen on the ground, volunteer on your next work day, or attend an open house. Include a link to your online donation page.
  - ▶ **Leverage your partnerships!** Organizations with which you collaborate share many of the same target audiences and have missions that align with or complement yours. Ask your partners if you can share a blurb about your work or upcoming initiative

## Step 4: Continued

via their newsletters - and offer to do the same for them in return. Be considerate of your partners by ensuring your content matches or complements their own strategy and needs, too.

- ▶ **Suggested no- and low-cost tools** for developing e-newsletters include:
  - *MailChimp*: According to the website, you can "Sign up for the Free Plan at [mailchimp.com/pricing/entrepreneur/](https://mailchimp.com/pricing/entrepreneur/). If you have 2,000 or fewer subscribers, you can send up to 12,000 emails per month free. No expiring trial, contract or credit card required."
  - *ConstantContact*: According to the website, "After your free trial runs out, email marketing with CC starts at \$20 per month for up to 500 contacts, and it increases to as much as \$90 per month for up to 10,000 contacts. Nonprofit organizations can prepay and save up to 30%." Visit [www.constantcontact.com/pricing](https://www.constantcontact.com/pricing).
- ▶ **Additional best practices** for e-newsletters include:
  - *Ensure that you can provide documentation* showing that people signed up to receive your news - either on a sign-up sheet or via online subscribe. Most professional email tools have a low tolerance for programs that send out lots of unsolicited emails that get marked as spam or that generate lots of bounce-backs, so documentation provides the proof you'll need if there is ever a problem.
  - *Always provide an option for subscribers to opt-out*. Professional email tools have a mechanism for inserting the opt-out language at the bottom of every email.

A sample list of questions to ask partners is included in **Supplemental Materials**.

- ▶ **Websites**. While websites are very often a static source of information and are an indirect way of reaching audiences, they are a no-brainer place for housing your impact stories, news announcements, and other updates about major accomplishments and milestones - with links directly from those stories to your donation function. A few tips:
  - ▶ **Give your program and project stories** a place to "live" on your site in a portfolio-style format, accompanied by plenty of striking visuals that illustrate your work on the ground
  - ▶ **Give your portfolio** its own home in the main menu so that the stories are easily found
  - ▶ **Share shorter story blurbs** and summaries via other channels, such as social media and newsletters, with links to the full story on the website.



*Current and prospective funders, donors, volunteers and other audiences will be looking to your website first to learn about your organization and its work. They will feel a sense of validation that your organization is "for real" when you have a website featuring stories about the impacts of your work and the difference you are making in the community - taking your content and your credibility beyond the basics about your mission, your programs, and the staff and board who make it all happen.*

## Step 5: Online Community Forums

**P**ost information, updates, and announcements about your programs and events to any online sites that take public submissions. Two examples of community forums are provided below - but these will vary according to what is available in your organization's town or region.

- ▶ **Nextdoor** ([www.nextdoor.com](https://www.nextdoor.com)): According to the website, "Over 165,000 neighborhoods across the

## Step 5: Continued

country use Nextdoor as a way of sharing neighborhood-related news." A few tips include:

- ▶ **You must sign up as an individual** (not as an organization), and you must provide your street address and email address in order to be verified as a bona-fide neighbor
- ▶ **Post information that is hyper-local** that people in the neighborhood would care about
- ▶ **Use a forum such as this** to post:
  - Invitations to events (such as open houses or community nights) to which the public is welcome, where people will be speaking or presenting stories and information about your programs and projects in the area
  - Invitations to events, projects or initiatives you are launching that need volunteers; spotlight the impacts of previous or similar projects in other areas, if possible
  - Invitations to events recognizing or awarding individuals from your area for their contributions to your services or initiatives
  - Videos and photos of highlighting the impact of your work in your area
- ▶ **Denver Post YourHub** ([yourhub.denverpost.com](http://yourhub.denverpost.com)): In the Denver metro area, YourHub is the Denver Post's online local news source and weekly print section. The website takes community contributions – some of which are selected by the paper's editorial staff and printed in the hardcopy edition. Tips include:
  - ▶ **To post stories** you'll need to create an account, and then use the web interface to post stories and photos and manage your profile. Complete instructions are located at [yourhub.denverpost.com/how-to-post/](http://yourhub.denverpost.com/how-to-post/).
  - ▶ **Stories can be posted** that are relevant to Adams County, Arapahoe County, Aurora, Denver, Douglas County and Jefferson County
  - ▶ **You can also post event information** in the calendar section
  - ▶ **Be sure to include** lots of photos!
  - ▶ **Use a forum such as this** to post:
    - Announcements about upcoming programs or projects the public is invited to attend or participate in
    - Articles featuring a newsworthy aspect of your project or program after it has taken place
    - Stories and testimonials related to the people and partners involved in your project



A list of event calendars is included in the [Recruitment Methods Guide](#) in the [Volunteer Engagement Module](#).

## Step 6: Face-to-Face

**Face-to-face interactions** with your community are a highly effective way to connect and engage with your target audiences as well as new potential supporters – and a prime opportunity to share information and stories about your programs and projects through direct conversations, presentations and distribution of materials.

- ▶ **Piggybacking on celebrated events and partnerships.** Consider hosting or organizing milestone celebrations, open houses, work days or award ceremonies to coincide with other existing events or in partnership with related organizations. Request to have a table or booth at their event, a speaking slot on the agenda, or a place to distribute fact sheets. For example, leverage these opportunities:
  - ▶ **Celebrated events:**

## Step 6: Continued

- National Volunteer Week
- National Get Outdoors Day
- World Water Day
- Land Trust Alliance's Rally: National Land Conservation Conference
- Conservation Week
- Colorado Public Lands Day
- National Public Lands Day
- Earth Day
- National Trails Day
- Colorado Day
- Arbor Day
- Federal fee-free days
- County fairs, music festivals and cultural events
- ▶ **Partnerships:**
  - Larger statewide, regional or national organizations (e.g. Trust for Public Land, Conservation Colorado)
  - State universities and community colleges
  - Local government agencies
  - Local rec center or public library
  - Local businesses – such as chambers of commerce, coffee shops or farmer's markets that do regular events
- ▶ **Events organized by you.** There are several cost-effective ways to garner attention about your programs and projects by hosting or organizing events at your location or in partnership with other organizations around town. A few ideas include:
  - ▶ **Milestone Celebrations:** Host an event to recognize important milestones in your organization – such as completion of a major project or initiative, or the 10th or 25th anniversary of your founding. Consider a ribbon-cutting to mark the event. Invite staff, volunteers, board members, community members/leaders, business owners, local elected officials, partners and local media.
  - ▶ **Open Houses:** Host an "open house" evening or weekend event that can serve as an opportunity to share information with community members and potential supporters about your organization, and invite them to participate in an upcoming opportunity, such as a volunteer gathering or a work day. Schedule two or three participants in your program, volunteers or board members to speak about the program and the impacts it's had on the community.
  - ▶ **Award Ceremonies:** Organize an annual awards event recognizing someone in your community for their unique contributions to or advocacy of your work – for example, a youth, a volunteer, a local elected official or a business leader. Ask your local City Council or County Commission if they are willing to recognize your award recipient at an upcoming meeting, and provide background materials and the news announcement about the impacts of that person's contributions on your local community.
  - ▶ **Work Days:** Invite members of your community to come out for a "Day in the Life" or a light work day so they can directly experience the efforts and see the rewards of this work for themselves (taking into account any liability concerns). Take the opportunity to give a brief educational or training seminar to teach them new skills in a fun and engaging way. Reward them with snacks and drinks or treat them to an ice cream social at the end of the day. Invite



## Step 6: Continued

local media to attend for a photo opp.

- ▶ **Event tips and reminders.** For events you organize or coordinate in partnership, consider the following (gauge the appropriateness of each depending on the event):
  - ▶ **Work with partners or business leaders** to secure a fun and unique location for the gathering, such as a public park or a local business
  - ▶ **Bring a small collection of printed** informational materials including a fact sheet, your annual report or recent newsletter, your impact story and/or a handful of testimonials demonstrating your programs and projects and their impacts
  - ▶ **Present a PowerPoint**, slideshow or video showing powerful stories and photos of your work
  - ▶ **Line up speakers** to talk about their involvement with the project, the impacts on the community and how your organization overcame challenges. Consider including a board member who can speak to his or her commitment to this work. Ensure that spokespersons are comfortable speaking with reporters – and provide them with suggested talking points that align with your event’s key messages.
  - ▶ **Send a media advisory** to local community newspapers or the local radio station inviting them to attend – and offer journalists an interview with someone who was impacted by your program. See the [News Releases & Media Advisories Guide](#) for details.
  - ▶ **Bring a sign-up sheet** for people to receive your latest news, as well as donor forms and envelopes

A variety of event invitation templates are included in [Supplemental Materials](#).



## Conclusion

**T**his guide provided tips and ideas to help your organization start or expand its community outreach initiatives. It explained a three-pronged approach to creating a community outreach strategy; provided a brief introduction to using online and digital tools for reaching out to your community; offered tips, checklists and implementation ideas for social media, email/e-newsletter, websites and online community forums; highlighted the value of face-to-face interactions when engaging with your community; and offered tips, checklists and event ideas when partnering with other organizations and piggybacking on existing opportunities.

A list of [Supplemental Materials](#) is provided below.

- ▶ **Strategy Templates**  
Includes strategic templates for developing your Situation Analysis, Community Outreach Plan, and Community Outreach Roadmap.
- ▶ **Facebook Posts & Mini-Campaign Examples**  
Examples of Facebook posts including those for Engagement and Making the Ask; as well as event promotion, weekly/monthly campaign posts, and re-sharing.
- ▶ **Questions to Ask Partners for Newsletter Content**  
A list of sample questions you can use when soliciting partners for cross-sharing newsletter content.
- ▶ **Event Templates**  
Includes templates for event invitations, requests for public meeting participation, and media or partner invitations to publicity events.
- ▶ **Sample Newsletter Blurb & Article Highlighting Impacts**  
Examples of short newsletter blurbs, as well as longer articles highlighting impacts of organizational work.



Check out the rest of the guides for  
**Marketing & Communications**

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Messaging

Storytelling

Media Relations

Community Outreach

Strategic Communications Planning

News Releases & Media Advisories

